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Hamilton, Alexander.

Letter to Mr. Henry
Whittemore... in relation
to the monument to
André erected by Mr.
Cyrus W. Field 1885.





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Hamilton, Alexander
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LETTER

—TO—

MR. HENRY WHITEMORE,

OF THE

ROCKLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

IN RELATION TO THE

MONUMENT TO ANDRÉ

ERECTED BY

MR. CYRUS W. FIELD.

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NOTICE.

The following letter was written in the hope of inducing the citizens of Rockland County to take no further action in relation to the Monument to André erected by Mr. Field.

“NEVIS,” IRVINGTON P. O.,
WESTCHESTER COUNTY, N. Y.,
October 16, 1885.

HENRY WHITTEMORE, ESQ.

DEAR SIR,—I have seen with surprise and regret the proceedings of a meeting held at Nyack a few days ago in relation to the destruction of the André monument at Tappan, in which meeting you took a prominent part. If, as your Chairman, Capt. Lewis, said in his few remarks, “This was not a monument to André, but it was a monument to the courage of George Washington, who hanged the spy,” the stone would never have been disturbed, but the worthy Captain is mistaken, or has not carefully read Dean Stanley’s inscription.

We all know the story, which you told, of the origin of this monument, and those of us who knew the eminent and kindly Dean, well knew that Dean Stanley’s hobby, or one of them, was Major André, in connection to a certain extent with his greater hobby, Westminster Abbey. Mr. Field’s only motive in erecting the monument was, no doubt, to gratify Stanley, who, if he considered André a hero and martyr, had a right to his opinion, expressed in a monument in the proper place.

I have said your Chairman is mistaken about the monument, which Dean Stanley at least, beyond question, intended in honor of André. His inscription is as follows:

“Here died, Oct. 2, 1780, Major John André, of
“the British Army, who entered the American

“ Lines on a secret message to Benedict Arnold for
 “ the surrender of West Point. His death, though
 “ according to the stern code of war, moved even
 “ his enemies to pity, and both armies mourned
 “ the loss of one so young and so brave. *A hun-*
dred years after the execution, this stone was
 “ placed upon the spot where he lay by a Citizen
 “ of the United States, against which he fought,
 “ not to perpetuate the record of strife, but as a
 “ token of those better feelings which have since
 “ united two nations, one in race, one in language,
 “ and one in religion.” * * *

Pausing for a moment over “those better feelings,” and to show the danger of sentimental nonsense, we remember that about fifteen years only have passed since England made us a formal apology in a treaty—the first, it is believed, in her history—for grievous wrongs inflicted on us in our civil war, which justly aroused a deep feeling in the United States, not to mention the hostile sayings of her most prominent men—Disraeli and Bright excepted—which were afterward apologized for or excused. I refer to this on account of the mischief such attempts at sentiment between nations create. Washington’s rule, “enemies in war, in peace friends,” is the safest guide in all cases.

Who, in ignorance of the facts, on reading this inscription, would imagine that Major André, Adjutant-General of the British Army, had been engaged for months in the attempt to seduce an officer of high rank in the American Army to betray his country and inflict upon it a deadly

blow; opening a correspondence with Arnold's wife for the purpose, whom André had known as Miss Shippen; that a part of the price of the treason was "vulgar gold;" and that André himself expected to be made a Brigadier-General in case of success ?

But this is not all. The direct inference from the phrase, "a hundred years after his execution," etc., is that the citizens of the United States have condoned André's crime; and "A Citizen of the United States"—meaning the modest Mr. Field—acting for the whole community, has placed his stone as evidence of such forgiveness, and as token of "better feelings" than those under which Washington acted when he caused André to be hanged. The "stern Code of War" is another distinct criticism upon Washington's act, who, as is well known, refused André's application to be shot, backed by the urgent request of Colonel Hamilton, his Aid, and performed a painful duty—simply because he considered it to be his duty—by affixing, in the mode of his death, the stigma of infamy upon André's act.

As it stood, with the inscription of Dean Stanley, the monument was a sham and a fraud. Your Chairman, with others, possibly understands it one way; Dean Stanley, who, through his super-serviceable friend, Mr. Field, caused it to be erected, in another and very different way, and the latter is plainly the true construction.

In spite of all the tenderness with which André was treated by us while living, and his memory since his death, the people of this country have

not condoned his offense, and are satisfied he met his fate deservedly. They do not propose to erect, or wish to have erected, on our soil monuments to the man who was the instigator of a treason that has consigned Arnold's memory to perpetual infamy; and would have done us, in our struggle for independence, incalculable injury. The feeling on this point is clear, and not to be mistaken. I saw in a Rockland County paper two or three years ago, an article in which it was more forcibly than correctly stated, that "this CRAVEN stone" should not disgrace the county.

I hope and believe that there is not another citizen in the United States with sufficient audacity to outrage a just national sentiment, as Mr. Field has done in this instance. He seems to suppose that his conduct will be overlooked or pardoned by subscribing to the monument for André's captors, and offering to erect one to Nathan Hale. His reliance upon the power of money is too great. The lazy indifference or good nature of the American people can be roused, and it will go hard with Mr. Field if he is unwise enough to repair this stone a third time. His "intention" to build a "Washington" Park on the spot of André's execution, with avenues called after Lafayette and André's captors, is a transparent device to try to escape from an embarrassing position, as well as an attempted bribe to Rockland County.

My object in writing at such length to you, as a prominent member of the Rockland County Historical Society, is to urge you and the Society

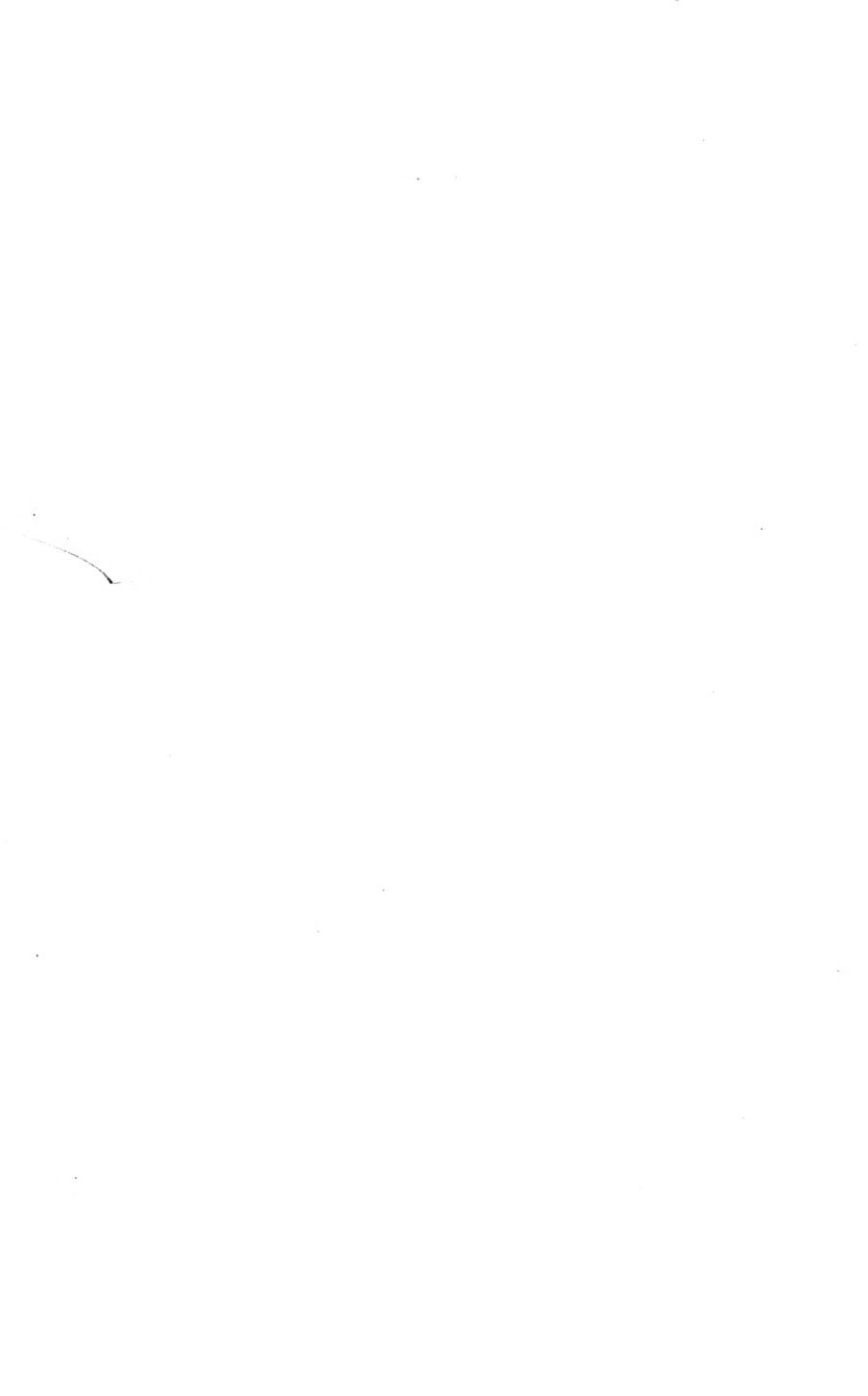
to have no further part or lot in this matter. It will lead to additional trouble.

Besides indignant articles in the papers, I have yet to meet the first person who is not pleased at the destruction of the monument. One of those of this way of thinking bears the name of an officer, one of the highest in rank, of the Army of the Revolution.

Your substituted "fourth" resolution, commending Mr. Field's zeal in perpetuating Revolutionary events, by erecting monuments, is a dangerous incentive for him. He is not happy in this line. Within three or four miles of Tappan is another historical spot of the Revolution, the site of the barn in which Baylor's Dragoons were massacred and bayoneted to death at night, while asleep and unresisting, by British Troops under General Grey, commonly called No Flint or Bayonet Grey. Should Mr. Field happily make the acquaintance of his descendant, Earl Grey, he might put up another monument on that spot, to palliate or excuse General Grey's conduct. The act of the latter—though justly held infamous—bore no proportion to the injury André's plot would have caused us, had he not lost his presence of mind when stopped by the militiamen.

Yours respectfully,

A. HAMILTON.



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